



5783 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein Pesach / פסח

## The Pesach of Yerushalayim

The name “Pesach” originates with the word used by the Torah to describe God’s saving of the firstborns of the Jewish people: “[God] pasach on the homes of the Jewish people when He smote the Egyptians and saved our homes.” What is the meaning of the word pasach? The simple translation is that it means “to jump” in the sense that God jumped over the Jewish homes.

The midrash, though, offers an alternative translation based on a verse from Yeshayahu chapter 31:

The word “pesicha” means “to take pity” as the verse states: “Like the birds that fly, even so will God shield Yerushalayim, shielding and having mercy (paso’ach), protecting and rescuing.”

From this verse we see that the word “Pesach” means to have mercy.

This verse is a fascinating intertext with the story of the first seder night as there are several points of connection between the story of the Exodus and the verse about the saving of Yerushalayim. First, as the midrash notes, the word “pesach” appears in both verses. Second, the word “hitzil” (“saved”) also appears in both contexts. Third, the imagery of flying birds in the verse in Yeshayahu teaches of the speed at which God will come to the Jewish people’s aid, reminiscent of the speed of the redemption on the night of the first seder.

These linguistic and thematic connections link the actual events discussed in the verses. The original Pesach occurred when the Jewish people left their slavery in Egypt. Chapter 31 of Yeshaya discusses the Jewish people’s desire to solicit help from Egypt during the Assyrian assault. The Jewish people wanted to ally themselves with Egypt to fight against Ashur and became reliant on the Egyptians. God, therefore, tells them: “For the Egyptians are man, not God, and their horses are flesh, not spirit.”



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It is God who protects Yerushalayim, not human beings and certainly not Egyptians.

The connections between these verses so many centuries apart highlight the ultimate purpose of the Exodus. God had mercy on the Jewish people in Egypt during the Pesach story as the first stage in a long saga. They are to journey through the desert, enter the Land of Israel and eventually come to Yerushalayim. That is the final destination for their journey. It is in Yerushalayim that God will continue to have mercy upon the Jewish people and eventually fully redeem them.

The many parallels between the Exodus and God protecting the Jewish people in Yerushalayim indicate that these are the bookends for the story of the Jewish people. ***When we celebrate the Exodus from Egypt, we should remember the purpose of the Exodus and where God's mercy will be fully revealed upon the Jewish people – in Yerushalayim.***

